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INCIDENTS OF FAIR OAKS AND MALVERN HILL BATTLES.

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LOYAL LEGION.)

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No one can notice the movements of all the troops while a battle is raging. The historian, therefore, is compelled to make a mosaic for future reference, by taking, "here a little and there a little," from the reports of officers of the cavalry, artillery and infantry branches of the service, and sometimes the observations of one holding an insignificant position helps to fill up a gap, as a very small stone is useful in giving completeness to Florentine work. Not without hope that it may excite some interest, a paper has been prepared of INCIDENTS OF FAIR OAKS AND MALVERN HILL BATTLES.

Sedgwick's Division of Sumner's Corps of the Army of the Potomac in the spring of 1862 was near Wynne's Mill, on the old road between Yorktown, Va., and Warwick Court House.

On Sunday, the fourth of May, while it was yet dark, the booming of the enemy's cannon, which had continued at intervals during Saturday night, suddenly ceased, tents were folded, and they silently stole away. By sunrise, Gorman's Brigade, to which the First Minnesota Regiment belonged, had clambered over the earthworks, and during the day amused themselves in picking up letters and other mementoes which the soldiers of the insurgent army had left. On Monday night, in a soaking rain, the regiment stood on the historic fields where Lord Cornwallis, in 1781, had surrendered to the allied French and American forces. The next afternoon the brigade was transported in steamboats up the York river, and on Wednesday, the seventh of May, reached the mouth of the Pamunkey river, and formed a portion of the division opposed to some Confederate regiments, falling back from Williamsburg. Before I could leave the transport on which I was, three cannons on an eminence pointed their muzzles thereat, and with balls stirred the mud in the river, but in a little while United States gunboats steamed up, and with their heavy ordnance soon silenced the battery.

From West Point, the terminus of the Richmond and York River Railroad, Sedgwick's Division, by slow marches, moved toward Richmond. One morning the First Minnesota Regiment halted at a brick church more than a hundred and fifty years old,—St. Peter's by name,—before whose rector, George Washington, in January, 1759, did take Martha Custis by the right hand, and reverently say, "I, George, take thee, Martha, to my wedded wife, to have and

to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish till death do us part." The soldiers entered, and in quietness and thoughtfulness examined the venerable structure.

By the twenty-third of May, the First Minnesota Regiment was encamped at Goodly Hole Creek, and during the week was engaged in cutting down trees, and building a bridge across the Chickahominy. It was called Grapevine Bridge, because grapevines had been used as binding cords in the absence of ropes. There were constant rains, and on Friday night, the thirtieth of May, the windows of the clouds were wide open, and torrents of water poured out. Lightnings, like zigzag arrows of fire, darted to the earth, followed by long rolls of thunder. The superstitious might have supposed that there was war in Heaven.

On Saturday, the last day of May, the sun appeared, the skies were blue, and the laurel, peach and magnolia were in blossom. As the midday meal in Gorman's Brigade was about finished, officers and soldiers were startled by the quick fire of musketry and discharge of artillery on the Williamsburg road toward Richmond. Not long after, while conversing at General Gorman's headquarters, I saw a horse dash by, spurred by his rider. Sumner writes in his official report that it was one o'clock in the afternoon when he received an order to move at a moment's notice. A few minutes after the rider passed, staff officers and mounted orderlies began to hurry to and fro. Soon Gorman's Brigade, with the First Minnesota Regiment in advance, was on the march to Grapevine Bridge. There were no laggards. Every soldier seemed eager to act well his part, but the troops were forced to hasten slowly, and often, like Tantalus of the Greek mythology, stand in a

pool. As the bridge was approached, it was seen to be surrounded by swift water. The soldiers waded up to their waists, reached it and crossed. Then followed Kirby's Battery, the drivers lashing their horses, the nozzles of the guns immersed, and as they plunged on the log bridge it trembled, undulated, and was ready to float away.

After crossing the Chickahominy there was a brief halt on an elevation, where was the residence of a Doctor Trent. Noticing a lad, about sixteen years of age, sitting on a fence, I asked him if he knew anything about the battle. He was quite excited, and, pointing toward Fair Oaks station, said that he had heard a blowing, like a gust of wind, in that direction. It was an expressive description of the zip-zip sound of minie-balls, and the sighing and screeching of shells heard at a distance. As the regiment was marching from thence to the scene of conflict, while riding by the side of Major Morgan of the First Minnesota, I saw an officer on foot approach, and exclaiming, "General Gorman!" seize him by the hand. To me his presence was a great surprise. In 1854 he had been a plasterer in St. Paul, and had rough-cast my house on Summit Avenue, the first built between Dayton and Laurel avenues, the site of which is now occupied by the costly, extensive and massive brown stone residence of James J. Hill. In 1858 he was appointed chief of police of the city. In consequence of the death of his wife, before the war, he returned with his children to Philadelphia, and was now Capt. John W. Crosby, of the Sixty-first Pennsylvania Regiment, slightly disabled.

The Richmond and York River Railroad and the Williamsburg country road are parallel, and at little distance from each other. The so-called "Nine Mile Road" from Richmond runs diagonally from a point called the "Old Tavern" and crosses the railway at "Fair Oaks" station and reaches

the Williamsburg road at "Seven Pines." Early on Saturday afternoon, General Abercrombie's Brigade of Couch's Division of Keyes' Fourth Army Corps was in this vicinity. A Philadelphia regiment, the Twenty-third Pennsylvania, commanded by an officer of the regular army, Col. Thomas H. Neill, was posted on the "Nine Mile Road" between "Seven Pines" and "Fair Oaks," and the Sixty-first Pennsylvania, Colonel Rippey, was on the same road, leading from "Fair Oaks" to the Trent house.



BATTLE FIELDS AROUND RICHMOND.

Colonel Rippey was killed; all of his field officers and a number of captains wounded. General Abercrombie, in the crisis, made a stand near the Courtenay house. General Couch in his report wrote that "he [Couch] became separated from the main body of his division, and that, with General Abercrombie, four regiments, and Brady's Battery, made off toward the Grapevine Bridge, and took a position facing Fair Oaks. Soon Captain Van Ness brought me word that General Sumner was at hand. This

noble soldier came on rapidly with Sedgwick's Division, and when the head of his column was seen, half a mile distant, I felt that God was with us and victory ours."

As the First Minnesota, Col. Alfred Sully, reached the critical position, he was directed to the right of General Abercrombie. Colonel Sully rode into a field near the Courtenay house with his staff, and dismounted to make observations. Stooping down, and looking into the belt of woods in front, instantly with expletives forcible but not at all polite, I heard him call out to Adjutant Chase, "Hurry the regiment into line!" Standing by my horse, holding the bridle, I noticed that his ears were bent back, and that he was very restless. He was not like his rider, slow to hear. It was evident that something was coming. There was a chicken-coop in front, made of very frail slats, and, foolish fellow as I was, I wondered if it would be expedient to lie behind it. Deliberation on the subject was stopped by a swift blowing, and leaves falling from the adjoining trees. The enemy had aimed too high, and no one was injured.

It was not very long before the whole of Gorman's Brigade came up. The right of the First Minnesota rested upon the Courtenay house, and the left upon a piece of woodland. The other three regiments, Thirty-fourth New York, Fifteenth Massachusetts and Eighty-second New York, were upon the left of Abercrombie's Brigade. A battery of the First United States Artillery, commanded by Lieut. Edward Kirby, the same battery which, under Ricketts, the First Minnesota Regiment had followed into action at the battle of Bull Run, was on an elevation in front of a peach orchard, near the angle of the woods. The rapidity of the loading and firing of Kirby's guns sounded like the incessant pounding in some great steam-boiler shop and excited the attention and admiration of General Sumner and the



division commanders. The rebel troops, under Gen. Gustavus W. Smith, concealed by the woods, were equally annoyed by the death-dealing shot, and Gen. Wade Hampton of South Carolina was ordered with his brigade to emerge and take the battery. They appeared in the field to the right but were quickly driven back.

About seven o'clock in the evening, Johnston, the general-in-chief of the Confederates, was severely wounded, and then the command devolved upon Gen. G. W. Smith. The latter in his official report wrote: "Very seldom, if ever, did any troops in their first battle go so close to a covered line under so strong a fire, and remain within such short distance, so long a time. Various attempts were made to charge, but without that concert of action almost absolutely necessary to success, and the gallant spirits who attempted it were very many of them shot down."

Toward seven o'clock I noticed a Union officer of high rank on horseback come out of the woods. He was without a hat and seemed "all forlorn," as the horse was being led by a staff officer to a place of security. It was General Abercrombie, from whom Fort Abercrombie in Minnesota derived its name. He had entered the woods with his adjutant, Capt. Samuel Appleton, now a member of the Minnesota Commandery of the Loyal Legion, to learn the situation of the enemy, and was fired upon. A ball passed through and carried away his cap, scraped his scalp, and frightened his horse, who threw him to the ground and ran away. Chaplain Oliver, who had volunteered as one of his aids, perceiving the situation, rode in, lifted him upon the saddle of his own horse, and led him out in a dazed condition.

The battle did not cease until the shades of night had fallen. Then the woods seemed to be alive with huge light-

ning bugs; but they were the soldiers of the blue and gray, with lanterns, searching for dead comrades, and, observing the amenities of humanity, did not molest each other while engaged in their sad work. That night the soldiers of the First Minnesota were kept busy in building an intrenchment in front of the Courtenay house made of felled trees covered with earth, and on fair days the flag of the regi-



THE COURTENAY HOUSE.

ment was displayed therefrom. Gen. J. E. Johnston in his report wrote: "About sunset, being struck from my horse, severely wounded by a fragment of a shell, I was carried from the field and Maj. Gen. G. W. Smith succeeded to the command. He was prevented from renewing his attack the next morning *by the discovery of strong intrenchments not seen on the previous evening.*" He did not see them on Saturday before sunset because they had not then been constructed.

The floor of the Courtenay house on Saturday night was a sleeping place for several Union officers, and there was also brought to the one-story annex a wounded soldier of Hampton's Brigade. He was a tall, dark-haired and fine

looking man. Kneeling by his side, I asked if his wounds were serious, and learned that they were not. He said that he was a small South Carolina planter from the Edgefield district, and that just as he was about to pull the trigger of his musket, felt dizzy, then a weakness of the legs, sunk to the ground wounded, and was picked up and brought in by our soldiers. He remarked "that since he had been lying on the floor he realized that he had been deluded. Under the heated denunciations of political orators he had come to look upon Yankees as a species of incarnate demons, and imagined that death would be preferable to capture. To-night, my mental vision is cleared, and I find that my captors are of the same English race as a little thought should have before taught me, bravely contending for the union of the states, which they believe is essential to liberty."

The First Minnesota Regiment was not actively engaged on Saturday after Kirby's Battery opened fire. By order of Colonel Sully, it sat behind a fence, and while in this position, Nicholas Hammer, a worthy Dane, of Company F, was killed by a ricochet shot, and I buried him the next morning in the yard of the Courtenay house. After Gorman's Brigade had been fighting some time, Adjutant Chase of the First Minnesota rode up, and with well meant kindness but poor judgment, informed me that my brother, Colonel Neill of Abercrombie's Brigade, had been killed. At the battle of Bull Run, having heard many wild rumors that failed to be confirmed, I did not feel that his death was certain, although the announcement in the midst of the conflict was not soothing.

Early Sunday morning, with the consent of General Sedgwick, I walked over the field to see if I could find out where my brother was, and if he were dead or alive.

About seven o'clock I came to the limber of an artillery carriage, upon which was sitting General Sumner, with General Couch by his side, to whom he introduced me. Mentioning my errand, the latter said, "I do not know where he is. Yesterday afternoon I was separated from his regiment, closely pressed by the enemy, as my coat, torn by bullets, will show." While speaking, the battle again commenced, the generals hurried to their duties, and I was left a lonely non-combatant. Noticing some ambulances hurrying to the point where the troops were engaged, I moved toward them, but had not gone far when I came to a wounded officer on the ground, whose eye indicated recognition of me. Stooping down, I inquired who he was, and the reply was, "Adjutant of the Seventh Michigan." He appeared to be severely injured, and as I could be of no service reluctantly left him. Soon I met Surgeon Liddell of General Burns' Brigade, and he asked me to hold his case of instruments while he performed minor operations. Passing a small outhouse, which had a blanket suspended in place of a door, he told me that Gen. O. O. Howard was therein, with a wound in the arm, and as the day was very hot, with his assent, it was proposed to amputate the limb in the afternoon. After General Howard was disabled, the command of his brigade devolved upon Col. Edward E. Cross of the Fifth New Hampshire, and in less than an hour he was carried by, sitting up on a stretcher, sucking a lemon, and in good spirits. He told us that he hoped in a few weeks to be again in active service.

The surgeon's operating table was a novelty. It was a barrel on its side, placed against a tree, in front of a farm house. I was expected to keep the barrel steady by placing one of my feet under it, and then held the patient

against the tree with one hand, while the surgeon used the knife. After working two hours or more, Dr. Liddell said he needed rest, and I returned to the Courtenay house. About midday an orderly rode up and gave me the following note :

"I have the pleasure to inform you that Colonel Neill is alive and uninjured. Very respectfully, your ob't serv't,

FRANCIS A. WALKER,  
A. A. G., Gen. Couch's Division."

Thus was the rumor of the day before happily dissipated.

The writer of the note was then only twenty-two years old. At the close of the war he was a brevet brigadier general. Since then he has been distinguished as a writer on political economy, and is now president of the Massachusetts School of Technology.

I had desired to know if the adjutant of the Seventh Michigan had survived. About ten years ago I was standing at the Jackson street landing in St. Paul, when a steamboat approached. A Rev. Mr. Landon, then a Minneapolis pastor, came up and told me that he was expecting a brother. When the passengers came ashore I was introduced to the relative, a physician. When he heard my name, he said: "I knew a clergyman of your name in the Army of the Potomac, when I was a member of the Seventh Michigan." To the question, "Can you tell me if your adjutant who was severely wounded at Fair Oaks survived?" he smilingly replied, "I am the person."

By noon of Sunday, the tenth of June, the Confederate army had been fully checked, but the Union troops could make no advance. Heavy showers again commenced. The roads were impassable for artillery and the mules of the commissary wagons could draw but half loads. The mud was a thick paste, and soldiers floundered in it like tod-

dling children. Brigade commanders during the forced inaction arranged their headquarters and surgeons were occupied in sending the wounded to the hospitals in the rear. Colonel Sully had possession of the Courtenay house. He occupied the north room on the first floor, and the chaplain of the regiment the room directly above, who, when he laid on the floor to sleep, was always comforted by the thought that there was a thick brick chimney between him and the enemy's artillery. Among the prisoners brought within the lines of the First Minnesota was a Confederate colonel whose face had been bruised by the explosion of a shell. He had been placed at first in an outhouse, but Surgeon Hand, the day after the battle, thought it would be better to remove him to a room in the Courtenay house. He ordered hospital attendants to take a door from its hinges for the purpose. Thereon he was carefully placed, and slowly carried, with bruised and bloated face, and eyes closed with suppuration. Before the house was reached his hand was imploringly extended as if he thought they were taking him to a burial place. When within the house he was sponged with tepid water and the matter wiped from his eyes, so that he was soon able to see, and to smile about the impression he had gained, in his blind weakness, that he was on a march to the grave.

On the third of June, Gen. J. G. Barnard, chief engineer of the army, visited Sumner's Corps for observation, and during his stay slept at the Courtenay house, in a vacant room on the same floor with me, but on the side toward the foe. One morning, as day was breaking, shells began to fly near the house. The general was deaf like myself, but not so deaf that he could not hear the whizzing overhead. Quickly rising, he drew on his boots, and went down stairs. Although I was not an engineer officer, I followed in his footsteps.

A tall tree near the house appeared to be a target for the Confederates. A cannon ball struck a tree not far from the house, in front of General Gorman's tent, and cut it in two. The members of the First Minnesota Band made a hut for themselves. Three feet of it was below the ground, and about five feet, of logs, was above the surface. Once I was suddenly summoned thither, and as I entered saw the nephew of W. H. Nobles, a citizen of St. Paul, leaning against the side toward the enemy. His face was placid, and there was no discoloration, but his heart did not beat. A round shot had struck the log where his head was, and although it did not penetrate, the concussion was sufficient to snap the thread of life.

The eighth of June was a bright, balmy Sunday. Birds in black, orange and scarlet plumage flitted among the branches of the trees, and sang clearly and sweetly, filled with "mad joy" in leaving their secret nests. The cannons of the enemy seemed ashamed to make a noise, and after the morning meal soldiers basked, and thought of "home, sweet home."

My attention, about nine o'clock, was attracted by the riding of the pleasant, young French princes, volunteer aids of General McClellan, toward Sedgwick's quarters. It was not long before the whole of Sumner's Corps was ordered to appear as on dress parade. There came down the line a number of officers wearing rich, silver-embroidered uniforms. In front rode a black-haired, dark-visaged, determined looking man, hat in hand, and graciously bowing as regiment after regiment presented arms. He was Marshal Prim, on his way from Mexico to Spain, subsequently known as the friend of the Republican Castelar, active in the deposition of Queen Isabella, and virtually the dictator of his native land.

On the afternoon of the twelfth of June, Medical Director Hammond suggested that I should visit a hospital on the north side of the Chickahominy, which stream I crossed at Bottom Bridge. Night came on before I could return, and I stopped at the plantation of a Doctor Mayo. The family mansion was closed, but at the negro quarters I found some slaves who permitted me to sleep at the house. Upon the promise of ample pay, they prepared for me the best meal I had for several months tasted in Virginia. The Mayo family had left their cows, and I enjoyed the milk, butter and biscuits. Upon leaving the next morning, I purchased some butter, which the negroes, for the want of something better, placed in an empty asafetida can, which they found in the doctor's office. As I passed the camp of the Twenty-third Pennsylvania, which was then quite near to the Courtenay house, I left the butter for the use of Colonel Neill and staff. That evening I called at the colonel's tent, and profuse was the praise of the butter and its very rich flavor. There was a willingness to heap blessings upon me, to call upon Leigh Hunt's angel of Abou Ben Adhem, to "write me, as one that loved his fellow men." The praise was too great to be borne, and I had to confess that confinement in the asafetida can had added to the fragrance so much admired.

General McClellan seems to have contemplated a change of base about the middle of June. On the eighteenth the chief commissary of subsistence, by his order, had vessels sent from Yorktown to City Point, on the James river, with 800,000 rations. On the twenty-fifth, Wednesday, the chief quartermaster, General Van Vliet, telegraphed to Colonel Ingalls, at the White house, on the Pamunkey, "Have your whole command in readiness to start at any moment. Please consult with Lieutenant Nicholson of the



navy to have his vessels placed in such a position that he can protect our depot. There will be no attempt to turn our flank for a day or two, but from all the information we have, it is supposed that Jackson will be coming down soon." The very next day, Thursday, Jackson and Hill of the Confederates attacked, near Mechanicsville, General Porter's Corps. On Friday was the battle of Gaines' Mill, and those of Sumner's Corps, near the Courtenay house, were made to feel that the conflict was desperate when, about five o'clock in the afternoon, they saw the brigades of Generals French and Meagher hurrying to the relief of the hard-pressed troops of Porter. That night I slept in Surgeon Hand's tent, and before sunrise I rose, on Saturday, the twenty-eighth, and walked toward the Courtenay house, and found General Sedgwick and Colonel Sully in silence, sitting on a rude bench in the yard—the former, as usual, modest and quiet, with none of the insignia of rank, without a coat, wearing only a simple blue flannel shirt. To the remark that the morning was sultry, Sully said, "Yesterday afternoon was bad for our troops." About six o'clock in the evening, Surgeon Hand told me that Medical Director Hammond had been ordered to send off the sick and wounded, in ambulances, toward the James river, and asked me if I would accompany the train. It was not long before the procession of sufferers was moving. As I rode toward Fair Oaks station, I noticed soldiers unscrewing the lids of cartridge boxes and throwing the contents into the vat of a tannery. At the railway crossing a pile of cases of pilot bread, twenty or thirty feet high, had been set on fire. There was no confusion. The only frightened person was a sutler who had hastened to be rich, and now was packing his wares in order that he might save his chattels and hasten out of danger.

The forest through White Oak swamp was packed with wagon trains. The dark night and muddy road compelled them to go "at a snail's pace." Toward morning I reached White Oak creek; found some confusion among the wagoners, and a flashing of many lanterns. An officer riding by recognized me. It was Capt. William G. Le Duc of Hastings, Minn., assistant quartermaster of Dana's Brigade, afterward chief quartermaster of Hooker's Corps, and at the close of the war made brevet brigadier general. He said, "Hold my horse's bridle. We have been waiting for axes, which have arrived. If we do not widen the road, so that four or five wagons can move abreast, we may lose a part of the train." Jumping from his saddle, he took an axe and went to work with the men in cutting down trees.

Sunday's sun arose, and its rays were very warm. About seven o'clock Le Duc rode up to me and pointed to a wagon in the creek sunk in mud to its axles, laden with oats, from which the mules had been taken, and told me to ride in, with my penknife cut a hole in a bag, and allow my horse to feed. As I sat in the saddle, a gentleman dressed as a civilian, and very dusty, rode up, and inquired if his horse could have some oats, and, by permission of the quartermaster, he went to the other end of the bag. In a few minutes my horse caught his by the nose and showed so much ill-will that I rode away. The selfishness of man I had often witnessed in the army; it was the first time I had observed the selfishness of the horse. The gentleman by my side was the Prince de Joinville [De-Zhwan-vel], the third son of Louis Phillippe, late king of France. When a young naval officer, he was intrusted with the removal of the remains of Napoleon from St. Helena to Paris. Since 1848 he had been an

exile, and was now on a visit to his nephews, the young princes on General McClellan's staff.

The saddest sight that day was sick soldiers, exhausted by the march, lying with closed eyes in the shade of trees, or tottering along with the aid of sticks. During the afternoon I found General Gorman sick on the porch of a farm house on an elevation overlooking White Oak swamp. As I sat by him, a cloud of white smoke arose in the direction of the railroad, and at a great height stood for a time. I thought of the pillar of cloud that by day preceded the army of Moses. It was caused by the blowing up of the bridge over the Chickahominy, the destruction of locomotives, and other war material.

Early on Monday, the twentieth of June, the First Minnesota, that had been engaged the afternoon before in the battle of Savage Station, crossed the creek, and I was glad again to be with my regiment. After marching about two miles, there was a halt, and I rode ahead, to find a shady place where I could write to the governor of Minnesota a report of Sunday's battle, in which color-bearer Burgess, a noble fellow, had been killed. I dismounted at the Willis Methodist church, and enjoyed rest, in a shady grove. Between two and three o'clock in the afternoon the woods behind me were suddenly filled with the rattle of musketry. Mounting my horse, I rode back to join the regiment, but increasing reverberations showed that a fierce battle had begun. It proved to be the Confederate onslaught upon General McCall's troops. A proverb is said to be the quintessence of wisdom, and remembering that "discretion is the better part of valor," I turned back, and, passing the Willis church, came to a wide plain gradually ascending toward the James river, known as Malvern Hill, which seemed to be made for a battlefield.

As I rode across it, I met General Couch, with a portion of his division, and the colonel of the Twenty-third Pennsylvania opened his line that I might pass through, when I checked my horse and watched the various movements.

The last of the great wagon trains was passing down to Haxall's Landing, on the James river. The drivers were excited by the battle raging at Glendale, or Nelson's Farm, but whenever they showed a disposition to drive furiously cavalrymen would ride up and compel them to go at a moderate pace, and thus prevented a panic. Never in the history of any war was a supply train moved with so little loss. The bellowing of cannon would be met by the response of bellowing animals. A herd of five hundred beef cattle crossed White Oak swamp and reached pasturage in the meadows of James river without the loss of a single beast.

During the latter part of this afternoon immense shells from the gunboats passed over our heads into the woods, where the enemy was. A Confederate soldier is reported to have said that his regiment was doing very well until great cooking stoves began to fly through the air and break into pieces in their midst. When night came, I slept on a sofa in the West house. The person who seemed to be the head of the household was a gentlemanly man, but greatly worried by the irruption of an invading army, trampling down his crops. Before the morning of Tuesday, the first of July, Sumner's Corps reached Malvern Hill from Glendale, and was posted on the right of the Union army. About eight o'clock, Confederate artillery took position in a wheat field, on the Poindexter farm, and opened fire, the shells bursting near the West house. The family, with some of their neigh-

bors, in consternation fled into the cellar, to which there was access by a large outside door. The head of the house in great distress inquired, "What shall I do?" There was a dressing table draped with red cloth, and I suggested that it be torn off and fastened on a long pole over the house, in the hope that it might alter the range of the shots. It was distressing to hear the moans and see the tears of the women in the cellar, and as General Meagher was riding by I directed his attention to them. With the impulsiveness of a kind Irishman, he drove up to the cellar door, and, looking down, assured the frightened ones that they would soon be relieved; but in what way I did not see. An old woman who once acted as guide for me at one of the historic spots of Ireland told some marvelous stories, and I asked her if she always told the truth. She said she did, but sometimes magnified the truth to make it pleasant. General Meagher, I fear, magnified the truth that morning to comfort tearful women.

There was the tent of a general pitched near the house, and one of his staff said that the flap was fastened down because the officer was washing and putting on clean clothes. Before long he emerged, carefully dressed, his sash thrown over his shoulders, and although having but one arm, the other having been left in Mexico during the war with that country, he gracefully vaulted into his saddle and rode away to duty. It was the rash, brave and dashing Phil. Kearney.

Gorman's Brigade was kept in a sitting position while exposed to the artillery fire, and during the morning a cannon ball bounded over the field and struck a worthy officer, Maj. Charles L. Brown of the Thirty-fourth New York, from the effects of which he died.

During the afternoon, while standing by General Sedgwick, I noticed a general approaching on horseback. As he passed along the right wing, with great enthusiasm, the soldiers tossed up their caps. It was McClellan. After he had conferred with Sedgwick I stepped up, and he extended his hand, which I remember on that warm day was covered with a gauntleted glove. His pressure was earnest, but he said not a word, and kept his eye toward the troops who were animated by his presence. His attitude was that of a cool, brave man, equal to his great responsibility. It was the last time I was near him, and there was reason why I looked upon him with some interest. He was born in the same city as myself. Our fathers were physicians. We were prepared for college by the same teachers. Before the war he had successfully wooed a graceful, delicate daughter of an army officer, living with her parents on Summit avenue in St. Paul, and she and her mother were communicants of the church to which I ministered. While his headquarters were in Washington I had been called from the field to his house, and in the presence of a few relatives and some of his staff officers had officiated at the dedication of his firstborn, and offered a prayer that the infant should become "Christ's faithful soldier."

Informed that there was need of surgeons, and that Brigade Surgeon Hand lay sick of a fever at Haxall's Landing, I rode by way of Turkey Bridge and found him, with his black servant acting as nurse. When he heard of the situation, he said that, although weak, if I would wait he would accompany me. It was about five o'clock when we reached Malvern Hill, and the two armies were fighting as when "Greek met Greek." For several hours there was an incessant cannonade. After dark it was an awful sight to see bursting shells, like angry, fiery meteors, rushing through the air.

About midnight, while lying on the grass under the crest of the hill, I found a movement of the army to the banks of the James river had commenced, and I mounted my horse and followed. Before daylight it began to rain, and at dawn I met two soldiers with straps over their shoulders carrying a stretcher, upon which was Lieut. A. J. Pemberton of the Twenty-third Pennsylvania. Unstrapping my shelter tent from the saddle, I threw it over him and passed on. He was a brother of Confederate Major General John C. Pemberton, who, the next year, surrendered Vicksburg to General Grant.

Although a digression, it is well to mention that about three years ago a nephew of General Pemberton came to see me. He said that his uncle was dead, and that during the last years of his life rejoiced in his own defeat, convinced of the error into which he had fallen, and believing that if independence had been obtained by the late slave states they would only have secured a Pandora box, from which would soon have emerged the demons of bitter internal strife and negro insurrections.

Before noon on the second of July the whole army had reached the James river, near the house in which Benjamin Harrison, the signer of the Declaration of Independence, was born, whose son, Gen. William H. Harrison, was president of the United States of America, and whose great grandson, Benjamin, now occupies the same exalted position.

That afternoon a driving rain began which continued until noon of the next day. The advancing army in the morning saw a land of plenty and beauty. Hundreds of acres of grain stood ready for the harvesters, and as the golden spears of wheat nodded in the breeze, one thought of the glittering lances of the knights who stood thick

around Henry the Eighth of England and Francis the First of France, on the "field of the cloth of gold." In twenty-four hours not a stalk stood erect. Under the heels of thousands of soldiers every green thing had been trampled, and with the aid of the rain, a mud mingled with straw had been formed which the old Egyptian brick-makers would have prized.

General Keyes, in "Reminiscences of his Life," alluding to General McClellan, writes: "If I were to estimate his qualifications by his conduct during the change of base to the James river, I should assign to him a rank as distinguished as any military leader."

On the fourth of July President Lincoln sent these cheering words: "Be assured the heroism and skill of yourself, officers and men are, and forever will be, appreciated."

The next day, Stanton, secretary of war, wrote: "Be assured you shall have the support of the department and the government as cordially and faithfully as was ever rendered by man to man, and if we should ever live to see each other face to face, you will be satisfied that you never had from me anything but the most confiding integrity. There is no cause in my heart or conduct for the cloud that wicked men have raised between us for their own base and selfish purposes. No man ever had a truer friend than I have been to you, and shall continue to be. You are seldom absent from my thoughts, and I am ready to make any sacrifice to aid you." Notwithstanding these cordial words, Welles, secretary of the navy at that time, asserts, in a published book, that for months before, the secretary of war had manifested hostility to General McClellan.

On an occasion like this, which calls us together to-night, it is not expedient to point out which secretary falsely wrote.



General McClellan was firm in the conviction that Richmond could be invested from the south side of the James river. On the seventh of July he sent these words to the president: "My men in splendid spirits and anxious to try it again. Alarm yourself as little as possible about me, and don't lose confidence in this army." On the twelfth the following was also transmitted: "I am more and more convinced that this army ought not to be withdrawn from here, but promptly re-enforced and thrown again upon Richmond. If we have a little more than half a chance we can take it. I dread the effects of the retreat upon the *morale* of the men." On the third of August General Halleck telegraphed: "It is determined to withdraw your army from the peninsula."<sup>1</sup> On the fourteenth he wrote to his wife: "We are going not to Richmond, but to Fort Monroe, I am ashamed to say. It is a terrible blow to me, but I have done all that could be done to prevent it, without success, so I must submit as best I can and carry it out."

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<sup>1</sup> General McClellan the next day replied:

"Your telegram of last evening is received. I must confess that it has caused me the greatest pain I ever experienced, for I am convinced that the order to withdraw this army to Acquia creek will prove disastrous to our cause."

As the army approached Fort Monroe, near midnight on August eighteenth, the following telegram was sent to Washington:

"HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF THE POTOMAC,

"Aug. 18, 1862, 11 P. M.

"Please say a kind word to my army that I can repeat to them in general orders in regard to their conduct at Yorktown, Williamsburg, West Point, Hanover Court House, and on the Chickahominy, as well as in regard to the Seven Days and the recent retreat.

"No one has ever said anything to cheer them but myself. Say nothing about me. Merely give my men and officers credit for what they have done. It will do you much good, and will strengthen you much with them, if you issue a handsome order to them in regard to what they have accomplished. They deserve it.

"G. B. McCLELLAN,

"Major General.

"Major General Halleck, Washington, D. C."

No notice was taken of this request.

It would be presumption in me, who, like "one Michael Cassio, a Florentine," in Shakespeare's Othello—

"Never set a squadron in the field,  
Nor the division of a battle knows  
More than a spinster,"

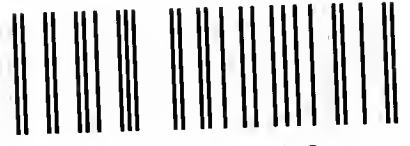
to enter into any military criticism; nor would it be proper to censure public men at Washington who appeared willing to prolong a civil war, to gratify personal ambition, or obtain the success of their political party.

While others may differ, I shall always remember the general-in-chief at Fair Oaks and Malvern Hill as a friend, a Christian gentleman, a commander who had the entire confidence of his soldiers.

"Did pluck allegiance from men's hearts,  
Loud shouts and salutations from their mouths."



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